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Letter dated 19 May 2010 from the Permanent Representative of Lebanon to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to convey herewith a concept paper for the Security Council meeting on the theme "Intercultural Dialogue for Peace and Security", to be held on 26 May 2010 in connection with the item entitled "Maintenance of international peace and security" (see annex).

I should be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Nawaf **Salam**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 19 May 2010 from the Permanent Representative of Lebanon to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Intercultural Dialogue for Peace and Security

Concept paper for the thematic meeting (briefing) proposed by Lebanon, to be held on 26 May 2010

Introduction

The Charter of the United Nations calls upon us, "We the peoples", "to practise tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbours ...", and "to achieve international cooperation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character, and in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion".

The General Assembly adopted the following resolutions: 56/6 of 9 November 2001, on the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations; 57/6 of 4 November 2002, concerning the promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence; 58/128 of 19 December 2003, on the promotion of religious and cultural understanding, harmony and cooperation; 59/23 of 11 November 2004, on the promotion of interreligious dialogue; 59/199 of 20 December 2004, on the elimination of all forms of religious intolerance; 61/161 of 19 December 2006, on the elimination of all forms of intolerance and of discrimination based on religion or belief; and 61/221 of 20 December 2006, 63/22 of 13 November 2008 and 64/81 of 7 December 2009, on the promotion of interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace.

In the 2000 Millennium Declaration, while considering fundamental values to be essential to international relations in the twenty-first century, world leaders stressed the importance of tolerance, stating: "Human beings must respect one other, in all their diversity of belief, culture and language. Differences within and between societies should be neither feared nor repressed, but cherished as a precious asset of humanity. A culture of peace and dialogue among all civilizations should be actively promoted." They also underlined the value of the dialogue on interfaith cooperation.

In the 2005 World Summit Outcome, world leaders reaffirmed their commitment "to taking action to promote a culture of peace and dialogue at the local, national, regional and international levels". They also welcomed the Alliance of Civilizations initiative announced by the Secretary-General on 14 July 2005.

The High Representative of the Secretary-General for the Alliance of Civilizations summed up the need for this dialogue based on the fact that "cultural diversity has become a major political issue challenging modern democracies, pluralism, citizenship and social cohesion, as well as peace and stability among nations".

In 2008, upon the initiative of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz of Saudi Arabia, the General Assembly held a high-level meeting on the Culture of Peace.

The General Assembly, in its resolution 62/90, declared 2010 the International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures.

In the past decade, the Security Council has been increasingly involved in conflict prevention and peacebuilding efforts, in particular since the adoption of resolutions 1366 (2001) and 1645 (2005).

Challenges

In our contemporary world, alienation, misconceptions, lack of respect, exclusion, marginalization and ignorance of the other's culture, traditions, beliefs and history have come to represent a serious threat to peaceful relations among peoples and nations.

Political implications of "essentialist approaches" especially about religions and civilizations, mutual fears, stereotyping, and preconceived ideas have given rise to dangerous acts of violence.

Perceptions of injustice, use of double standards, disregard of international law, situations of occupation and oppression have all created an atmosphere of tension.

In this context, the Security Council in fulfilling its role should, more comprehensively, address the need to promote intercultural dialogue for peace and security in order to overcome prejudice and hostile perceptions, to combat ignorance and xenophobia, and to advance a culture of reconciliation based on the values of respect, tolerance, diversity, equality, justice, protection of human rights and rule of law.

More specifically, Lebanon suggests that through the thematic meeting it proposes to hold on 26 May the Security Council consider "the Intercultural Dialogue for Peace and Security" as an instrument of:

1. **Preventive diplomacy**

   In particular, as a means to:

   - Diffuse tension
   - Support mediation
   - Fight ignorance and prejudice
   - Encourage understanding

2. **Conflict management and resolution**

   In particular, as a means to:

   - Identify common interests
   - Accept differences
   - Underline shared values
   - Support reconciliation efforts

3. **Peace building**

   In particular, as a means to:

   - Turn pluralism into a source of strength
   - Buttress inclusiveness
   - Foster tolerance
   - Consolidate the values of justice, equality and respect